

November 24, 1971

The airplane's rear stairs slowly lower. Frigid November air hits your face while you scan the Southern Oregon landscape below. It's the middle of the night, but any drowsiness you're feeling is being overcome by adrenaline as you picture what you're about to do. For a moment, you think of turning back, but then you consider all the extreme measures you've taken to get this far. Risky as it is, there's no backing down. You're going to jump. After strapping on your parachute, you tie a bag containing \$200,000 cash to your belt and tightly grip your briefcase. You have one last look around, take a deep breath, and plunge into the darkness. You've just taken the leap that will confound the world forever...

Earlier that day...

Your yellow taxi pulls into the Portland International Airport. You thank the driver and step out of the cab wearing a dark suit and black tie, carrying a large briefcase. If anyone asks, you're a business executive going to a conference in Seattle. Your name? No one knows for sure. Today you're giving it out as Dan Cooper. Walking quickly through the light rain you enter the airport. It's the day before Thanksgiving and the building is abuzz with people traveling to visit family and friends. You? Let's just say you're on a mission, a personal one. After purchasing a ticket and receiving a boarding pass, you take a seat by the window in the waiting area. You study the plane you'll be boarding and go over your plan for what seems like the thousandth time. A woman's voice comes over the loudspeaker. "Northwest Orient Airlines flight 305 is now boarding." When it comes to your turn in line, you show the young woman your ticket and boarding pass. She smiles and cheerfully says, "Thank you, enjoy your flight sir." You smile back and then walk down the long aisle to seat number 18E in the last row. After all other passengers board, you are relieved to see the seat next to you is empty.

while everyone is settling in, you order a drink. Soon a friendly voice comes over the plane's intercom. "Attention all passengers, this is your captain speaking. Welcome aboard Northwest Orient flight 305, service to Seattle. I'd like to wish you all a comfortable flight and a happy Thanksgiving. We are preparing for takeoff." The stewardess directs you to put your lap tray up and double checks your seatbelt. You watch out the window as the plane slowly lifts off the runway and climbs to altitude. About halfway through the trip, you see a flight attendant checking on other passengers and recognize her as the one who helped you board. Her nametag reads Tina. You decide to make your move and call her over. She walks toward you with a smile. Casually, you hand her a note. It informs her that if she wants to save the lives of the passengers, pilots, and herself she needs to sit down and listen to what you have to say. Her smile turns into a frown as she cautiously sits in the seat next to you. You open your briefcase to reveal what appears to be a bomb and an alarmed expression crosses her face. Then she shakily asks, "W-w-what do you want?"

Thirty minutes later...

Your plane lands in Seattle. You have requested \$200,000 cash, four parachutes, food for the pilots and attendants, and that they set a course for New Mexico. You wait patiently on the plane while your order is being filled. Soon, they come back with everything you asked for. They give you the ransom money in \$20 bills, which you put in a waterproof bag. Next, you inspect the parachutes before announcing that you're ready for takeoff and you allow Tina to get up to release the passengers, but require her to return. She accompanies you on your new flight. You contemplate that this could possibly be the last person you ever see. Forty-five minutes into the flight, you get up and ask her to go to the cockpit and lock the door behind her. As she walks away, you thank her for her cooperation and apologize for any inconvenience. She nods and gives you a weak smile. When she's out of sight, you swiftly walk toward the back of the plane.

You apprehensively open the rear stairs, revealing the rainy forest thousands of feet below. You carefully gather your things, and somewhere, south of Portland, leap into the dead of night. Cold air takes your breath away as you free fall for a few seconds before pulling the cord that will release your parachute. Nothing can compare to the exhilarating feeling of falling from a height for a long distance. Once pulled, you are instantly slowed down. Overhead, the sound of your plane slowly fades into the night as you carefully aim for a clear patch in the dense forest underneath. Closing your eyes tightly, you brace for impact. Never before has standing on solid ground felt so nice! After untangling your parachute from nearby trees, you sit down and allow your breathing to regulate. Your adrenaline is still going like crazy, and you decide to take advantage of the extra energy to get as far away as quickly as possible. Law enforcement will soon be hot on your trail. You've come too far to be caught now. You work your way through the vast forest for what seems like hours. During one of your brief stops, you notice the sun peaking over the horizon. Not only will the growing light make your going easier, but it will also be easier for those in pursuit.

You hit the trail again. You begin to think that you're going to get away. Suddenly, noises break the silence. All-terrain vehicles and the barking of large dogs fill the air. Blue and red flashing lights come into view. They're coming! Momentarily, you start to panic. Then you calm yourself down and remember that you've prepared for this. Grinning, you reach into your bag for the key to your escape, never to be seen or heard from again. Let the ultimate game of hide-and-seek begin!

45 Years later...

On July 8, 2016, the F.B.I. closes all windows to the D.B Cooper case. Yet many private investigators and average people around the world still wonder... why did you do it? Who were you? And if you're still alive, *where* are you?